

# NPL Site Narrative for Kerr-McGee (Residential Areas)

## KERR-McGEE (RESIDENTIAL AREAS) West Chicago/DuPage County, Illinois

**Federal Register Notice:** [August 30, 1990](#)

**Conditions at proposal (October 15, 1984):** The Kerr-McGee (Residential Areas) Site is in West Chicago and DuPage County, Illinois. The site covers the general area of elevated radiation levels adjacent to the Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. facility on the east (about 30 acres), as well as other adjacent areas and isolated spots of elevated radiation levels. About 15,000 people live within 3 miles of the site.

In 1931, Lindsay Light & Chemical Co. established a mill called the "Rare Earths Facility" in West Chicago for the extraction of thorium and nonradioactive elements from monazite and other ores. Later, the property was used for the manufacture of gaslight mantles (which contain thorium), mesothorium, and, during World War II, hydrofluoric acid. Ownership of the facility changed from Lindsay to American Potash & Chemical in 1958 and to Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. in 1967. Operations at the property continued until 1973, when Kerr-McGee, the current owner, closed the facility.

In 1978, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's contractor located 75 spots of elevated radiation levels in the residential areas. Since that time, the number has grown to around 87. Overlying many of these spots adjacent to the Kerr-McGee

facility is an area of generally elevated radiation levels. Although the general area of contamination may be due, in part, to long-term emissions from the facility, the primary source of contamination is believed to be the result of specific incidents such as spills or use of contaminated materials as fill.

**Status (June 10, 1986):** Because of an administrative error during the public comment period, EPA is extending the comment period on this site for an additional 60 days.

**Status (August 30, 1990):** Kerr-McGee has excavated contaminated soil at many properties within the West Chicago city limits and removed them to the Rare Earths Facility for storage. No work has been done at properties outside the city limits. The Kerr-McGee activities are voluntary, without EPA oversight or involvement.

*[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See [56 FR 5600](#), February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]*